

Iowa Code chapter 256I requires that local ECI Boards report progress toward and achievement of desired results identified in the Community Plan. Following is a narrative of the Linn County ECI Board's progress in the last year towards the priorities and strategies identified in the most recent Community Plan.

Child & Maternal Health Community Plan



Families in Linn County have an array of child and maternal health resources but face challenges with awareness, access, and disparate health outcomes. The Linn County Early Childhood Iowa Board and United Way of East Central Iowa offer the following Child & Maternal Health Community Priority, Strategies, and preliminary action steps.

Community Plan Priority:

Increase Awareness of and Access to Child & Maternal Health Resources for At-Risk Families.

Focus: Cohorts with disparate health outcomes: low-income, single parent households, teen parent, families with limited English proficiency, lower educational attainment, and African American mothers.

Linn County ECI Board Strategies to address this Child & Maternal Health Priority:

1. Ensure accessible and culturally responsive child and maternal health services.
2. Support early intervention of maternal mental health and child behavioral supports.
3. Promote the importance of preventative early child health screens.

FY 22 ECI Board and Program Activities

- As the board developed their fiscal year 2022 budget, they discussed programming and the funding that aligns with their priorities. Board members chose to retain programs that align with their community plan priorities.
- The Board created a strategic planning committee to hear from all programs and the ongoing concerns to provide quality services.
- The Board was very cognizant of the struggles for all programs with the ongoing repercussions of the pandemic and took this concern into consideration when working through funding scenarios.
- The ECI Board funds preventive child hearing, vision, and developmental screens which occur at WIC clinics, the Eastern Iowa Health Center, child care and various community sites. Linn County ECI, in conjunction with Medicaid, is the only funder of free preschool age hearing screens.
- Linn County ECI funds oral health screens, fluoride varnishes, vouchers, and care coordination for dental treatment.
- Since FY 18 the Board has funded 1st Five, which partners with physician's office to connect pregnant women/mothers, with identified family stability needs, to variety of local supports.
- The Linn County ECI competitive bid process awards extra points (weighted) to applicants that support early identification of dental needs in underserved populations.
- The CART program addresses child behavior health concerns in child care settings and reduces preschool expulsion through on-site TA support and training. This request for this service has tremendously increased with the mental health concerns of many children after the pandemic.
- The ECI staff worked with the Crimson Fellows program at Coe College to conduct surveys and focus groups that focused on the well-being and brain health of the children and providers. The information gathered supported a decision for FY23 to increase brain health, EPBIS funding to support the mental health needs of our children and support staff to understand how to handle the many different crisis they are encountering.
- Furthermore, the findings from the survey and focus groups indicated that more collaboration and partnering with local child care supports, CCR&R, brain health programs and CCNC was needed to

help align and support programs more holistically. Therefore, the Board approved of funding to create a child care hub partnership with all the programs listed below and create a strategic direction that promotes and increases access to these services along with creating some efficiencies to work together to create pathways of success for providers and children.

- ECI staff serves on local groups regarding child health (5210/County Obesity Action Team), child, youth, and adult mental health (Child & Youth MH, ECR & County Mental Health Action Teams).
- Annually the Board supports the Mind of a Child Summit hosted by Paces to Quality, which focuses on early childhood mental health and supports for caregivers.
- In response to COVID, the Board continued to grant some flexibility to programs to alter or change how they deliver services to best serve families. Budget and contract revisions enabled programs to continue services via technology when necessary.
- Board provided grant funds to increase training on multiple evidence-based practices to support brain health and EPBIS instruction.

Early Child Care & Education Community Plan



Linn County has an array of early care resources but families and employers face challenges with adequate access to quality, flexible, and affordable early care options. The Linn County Early Childhood Iowa Board and United Way of East Central Iowa offer the following Early Care & Education Community Priority, Strategies and preliminary action steps.

Community Priority:

Increase Awareness of & Access to Affordable, Available, Quality Early Care & Education Resources

Focus: Cohorts with disparate outcomes: working parents, low-income, single parent, families with limited English proficiency, lower educational attainment, teen parent, and African American mothers.

Early Child Care & Education Community Plan Indicator Data

Community indicators provide insight into the overall direction of a **community**: whether it is improving, declining, or staying the same.

Linn County ECI Board Strategies to address this Early Care & Education Priority:

1. Recruit new child care entrepreneurs and support existing quality child care professionals.
2. Increase community awareness of child care impact on workforce development and family success.
3. Assist child care providers to serve more children from at-risk families.

FY 22 ECI Board Activities

- Linn County ECI Board funded 63 slots of free, high quality full day/year early care for at-risk infant and toddlers in various licensed child care centers/preschools this FY.
 - 49% of children served were African American, 33% White 14% Multi-racial, 1% Asian, and 1% Other.
 - Almost 61% were from families with income <100% of Federal Poverty Level (FPL), 35% are 101-150% FPL and just 4% 151-200%.
- The ECI-funded Paces to Quality and Child Care Nurse Consultant programs to support child care provider enrollment in QRS through on-site TA, equipment grants and professional development.
- Linn County ECI Board and staff, in partnership with Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance, HACAP and Child Care Resource & Referral, continue to support two Child Care Solutions Teams (Child

Care Provider Supports and Child Care & Business Teams). ECI Board members and staff actively serve on both.

- The Linn County ECI competitive bid process awards extra points (weighted) to applicants that support or provide evening or weekend care.
- Staff in the YPN and Nurturing Parenting in-home visitation programs provide parents with information on enrolling children in quality affordable care.
- Since the FY 19 ECI bid cycle the Board emphasized enrollment in the Iowa Quality Rating System, and reaching level 5, to help child care providers obtain the corresponding increased CCA reimbursement. The bid also included incentives to providers that enrolled families using Child Care Assistance subsidy. No bidders selected that option but it will remain a Board priority.
- The ECI staff worked with the Crimson Fellows program at Coe College to conduct surveys and focus groups that focused on the well-being and brain health of the children and providers. The information gathered supported a decision for FY23 to increase brain health, EPBIS funding to support the mental health needs of our children and support staff to understand how to handle the many different crisis they are encountering.
- Furthermore, the findings from the survey and focus groups indicated that more collaboration and partnering with local child care supports, CCR&R, brain health programs and CCNC was needed to help align and support programs more holistically. Therefore, the Board approved of funding to create a child care hub partnership with all the programs listed below and create a strategic direction that promotes and increases access to these services along with creating some efficiencies to work together to create pathways of success for providers and children.
- ECI worked in partnership with United Way of East Central Iowa to provide \$80,000 in child care supplements to assist providers in staying open. ECI also provided an additional \$10,000 in cleaning supplies for these providers.
- Supported county wide child care appreciation efforts and funded speakers to support quality improvement of childcare services in Linn County.
- Supported financial incentives or equipment grants to child care center staff that remained employed and to in-home providers that remained open during Covid-19.
- Upon request, the Board provided its legislative priorities to the Linn County lobbyists and this one was selected for inclusion: "Address childcare and workforce shortages".
- Regularly shared CCR&R monthly data on child care closures, since July 1, 2020-today with Board, partners, legislators, and area funders.

Family Support & Stability Community Plan



Linn County is home to several resources but families face challenges with basic needs, access to the resources, and institutional barriers to economic stability. The Linn County Early Childhood Iowa Board and United Way of East Central Iowa offer the following Family Support Community Priority, Strategies and preliminary action steps.

Community Priority:

Increase Family Stability, Coordinated Services, and Access to Resources for At-Risk Families.

Focus: Cohorts with disparate outcomes: teen parents, families in poverty/ALICE threshold, parents of low-birthweight babies, single parent households, living in the presence of domestic violence, high ACE scores, mental illness, and families with limited English proficiency.

Family Support & Stability Community Indicator Data

Linn County ECI Board Strategies to address this Family Support Priority:

1. Invest in two generation/whole family approaches.
2. Reduce child maltreatment by targeting the risk factors correlated with abuse and neglect.

3. Promote care coordination efforts.

FY 22 Linn County ECI Board Activities

- The Board funds two (2) short term home visit, two (2) long-term home visit, and two (2) group based parent education programs to support healthy family development.
- 90% of families enrolled in home visiting program report they improved/maintained healthy family functioning, problem solving and communication.
- 82% of families attending group parent ed report they improved/maintained healthy family functioning, problem solving and communication.
- 100% of Family Support programs are Evidence based, have Iowa Family Support Credential or will be in the Credential process. Programs were invited to include their costs of taking the National Certification exam.
 - As of June 30, 2022 fourteen (14) program staff or 78% has successfully earned the Certificate.
- 100% of the childcare slots funded by ECI are full-day and/or year which allows parents to work or obtain training/school in pursuit of stable employment.
- Staff serves on an advisory team with United Way of ECI and Linn County Public Health to support a closed loop web-based referral network called Signify, in support of care coordination efforts.
- In response to COVID and staffing shortages on family support programs the Board provided extensive flexibility in service delivery and budget or contract revisions.
- ECI staff hosted family support networking Zoom meetings to allow program staff to interact with peers on challenges, fears, ideas, and successes.